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REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Addendum

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES ON THE WORK OF ITS FORTY-SIXTH SESSION*

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Opening of the session

1. The Executive Committee of the programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees held its forty-sixth session at Geneva from 16 to 20 October 1995. The session was opened by the outgoing Chairman, Mr. Ahmad Kamal (Pakistan), who began by welcoming Bangladesh, India and the Russian Federation, the three new members of the Executive Committee.

2. Mr. Kamal noted that, while there were a number of positive developments, particularly regarding solutions to certain long-standing refugee problems, various crises, such as those in the Great Lakes region and former Yugoslavia, persisted. He emphasized UNHCR's fundamental role in helping refugees achieve sustainable reintegration in their country of origin, particularly through the provision of protection and assistance in post-conflict situations.

3. Alluding to the current financial difficulties of the United Nations, the outgoing Chairman suggested that UNHCR pre-empt criticism by increasing efficiency, adhering to good management practices and exploiting computer-based information technologies to improve the information flow between headquarters, field operations and Governments. The results, in terms of speedier decision-making and decreased field-operation costs, could be far-reaching.

4. Refugee crises were bound to increase; the solution to them, the outgoing Chairman said, lay in resolving the factors, notably disputes, that lead to such crises. While UNHCR cannot take a direct role in resolving disputes, it could continue to prompt the international community to take action. Mr. Kamal concluded by noting that progress in addressing the root causes of refugee movements would ensure that the international community would not be faced repeatedly with the sight of mass movements across borders, an endless reproach to those who could have done more, but did not.

B. Election of officers

5. Under rule 10 of the rules of procedure, the Committee elected the following officers by acclamation:

Chairman: Mr. Jakob Esper Larsen (Denmark)

Vice-Chairman: Mr. Ali Said Mchumo (United Republic of Tanzania)

Rapporteur: Mr. Apichart Chinwanno (Thailand)

C. Representation on the Committee

6. The following members of the Committee were represented at the session:

Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Madagascar, Morocco, Namibia, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Russian Federation,

Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Venezuela, Zaire.

7. The Governments of the following States were present as observers:

Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Armenia, Belarus, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chile, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Oman, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

8. The European Commission, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Sovereign Order of Malta and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were also represented as observers.

9. The United Nations system was represented as follows:

United Nations Office at Geneva, Centre for Human Rights, Department of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Volunteers (UNV), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), International Labour Organization (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

10. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented by observers:

The League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Council of Europe and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

11. A total of 90 non-governmental organizations were represented by observers.

D. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

12. The Executive Committee adopted by consensus the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session;

2. Election of officers;

3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters;

4. General debate;

5. Programme, administrative and financial matters:

   (a) Review of UNHCR programmes financed by voluntary funds in 1994-1995 and of proposed programmes and budget for 1996;

   (b) Status of contributions and overall financial requirements for 1994 and 1995;

   (c) Administration and management;

   (d) Adoption of 1996 General Programmes;

6. Participation of Government Observer delegations;

7. Consideration of the provisional agenda of the forty-seventh session of the Executive Committee;

8. Any other business;

9. Adoption of the draft report of the forty-sixth session;

10. Closing of the session.

E. Opening statement by the Chairman of the Executive Committee

13. The incoming Chairman, Mr. J. Esper Larsen (Denmark), paid tribute to the High Commissioner for her skill, perseverance and courage and commended the dedicated work of the staff of UNHCR and of non-governmental organizations, particularly those working in the field.

14. The Chairman drew attention to the ever-growing numbers of refugees, displaced persons and others of concern to UNHCR who, at the end of 1994, amounted to some 27.4 million persons. He stressed the responsibility of the international community at large and of the Executive Committee in particular, in the face of crises in the Great Lakes region and the former Yugoslavia and in the many other situations of conflict around the world.

15. In responding to protection needs, most countries had demonstrated their readiness to adopt pragmatic and flexible approaches to provide temporary protection to persons fleeing conflict. The Executive Committee would need, however, to give consideration to how far Member States would be prepared to go beyond the existing international and regional instruments in order to ensure international protection to all who need it.

16. The Chairman also highlighted the burden shouldered by refugee-hosting countries, particularly the most impoverished among them, and expressed the view that international solidarity with and support for those countries had been insufficient. In the search for durable solutions through voluntary repatriation, reintegration and reconstruction, he stressed the need for development agencies to dovetail their efforts with those of UNHCR in the reintegration process. In this context, he recalled the resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its 1995 substantive session on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance (see para. 23).

17. Mr. Larsen concluded by referring to the process of reforming the working methods of the Executive Committee, which would extend the possibilities for the Committee to exercise effective governance in response to the desire of Member States for greater transparency, accountability and oversight.

II. WORK OF THE FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

18. The High Commissioner delivered an opening statement to the Executive Committee, the text of which is reproduced in the annex. Following this, Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, addressed the Committee. The full account of the deliberations of the Committee, including the statements or other interventions made by delegations on all the agenda items, as well as the closing statements by the Chairman and the High Commissioner, are contained in the summary records of the session.

III. DECISIONS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

A. Conclusions on international protection

1. General conclusion on international protection

19. The Executive Committee,

(a) Distressed at the continued suffering of refugees for whom a solution has yet to be found, reaffirms that respect for fundamental humanitarian principles, including safeguarding the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution, and full regard for the principle of non-refoulement, are incumbent on all members of the international community, and urges the continued commitment of States to receive and host refugees and ensure their protection in accordance with accepted legal principles;

(b) Notes that the search for solutions to refugee problems is an integral part of the High Commissioner's mandate for international protection, and that identifying and implementing solutions to the problems of refugees requires the constant support of the international community so that the will and capacity of individual States are reinforced in this common pursuit;

(c) Emphasizes the primacy of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol as forming the international legal basis for the protection of refugees, and underlines the value of regional instruments, as applicable, notably the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspect of Refugee Problems in Africa, as well as the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees and the 1994 San José Declaration on Refugees and Displaced Persons;

(d) Welcomes the accession of Namibia, the Solomon Islands, Samoa, and Antigua and Barbuda to the 1951 Convention and/or the 1967 Protocol, bringing to 130 the number of States parties to one or both instruments, and urges States which are not yet party to accede to those instruments, and all States to implement them fully;

(e) Reaffirms the competence of the High Commissioner in supervising the application of international instruments for the protection of refugees; stresses the importance of their interpretation and application by States in a manner consistent with their spirit and purpose; reminds States party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees 1/ and/or the 1967 Protocol 2/ of the undertaking in article 35 of the Convention, reiterated in Conclusion 57 of the fortieth session of the Executive Committee, in 1989, to provide the High Commissioner with detailed information on the implementation of the Convention, 3/ and urges those States parties which have not yet complied with that undertaking to do so;

(f) Recalls conclusion 74 (XLV), on international protection, adopted at its forty-fifth session, 4/ which encouraged the High Commissioner to engage in consultations and discussions concerning measures to ensure international protection to all who need it; reiterates its support for UNHCR's role in exploring the development of guiding principles to this end, consistent with fundamental protection principles reflected in international instruments, and calls on UNHCR to organize informal consultations on this subject;

(g) Calls upon the High Commissioner to support and promote efforts by States towards the development and implementation of criteria and guidelines on

responses to persecution specifically aimed at women, by sharing information on initiatives by States to develop such criteria and guidelines, and by monitoring to ensure their fair and consistent application. In accordance with the principle that women's rights are human rights, those guidelines should recognize as refugees women whose claim to refugee status is based upon well-founded fear of persecution for reasons enumerated in the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol, including persecution through sexual violence or other gender-related persecution;

(h) Condemns all forms of ethnic violence and intolerance, which are among the major causes of forced displacements as well as an impediment to durable solutions to refugee problems, and appeals to States to combat intolerance, racism and xenophobia and to foster empathy and understanding through public statements, appropriate legislation and social policies, especially with regard to the special situation of refugees and asylum-seekers;

(i) Recognizes that for States to fulfil their humanitarian responsibilities in receiving refugees, reintegrating returning refugees and addressing some of the causes of refugee movements, an effective human rights regime is essential, including institutions which sustain the rule of law, justice and accountability, and calls on UNHCR to strengthen its activities in support of national legal and judicial capacity-building, where necessary, in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights;

(j) Calls on all States to promote conditions conducive to the return of refugees and to support their sustainable reintegration by providing countries of origin with necessary rehabilitation and development assistance in conjunction, as appropriate, with UNHCR and relevant development agencies;

(k) Reiterates the right of all persons to return to their country, and emphasizes the prime responsibility of countries of origin for establishing conditions which allow voluntary repatriation of refugees in safety and with dignity, and, in recognition of the obligation of all States to accept the return of their nationals, calls on all States to facilitate the return of their nationals who are not refugees;

(l) Emphasizes the need to address problems pertaining to the return of persons not in need of international protection, and encourages UNHCR to cooperate with other international organizations in looking into ways in which the return process can be facilitated, and to inform the Standing Committee;

(m) Calls upon the High Commissioner to continue to expand and strengthen the Office's activities with regard to the promotion and dissemination of refugee law and protection principles with the active support of States and through increased cooperation with non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and other relevant organizations; further calls upon the High Commissioner to explore ways to integrate its activities in the areas of documentation, research, publications and electronic dissemination;

(n) Recognizes the role refugee community education can play in national reconciliation, and encourages UNHCR, in cooperation with other organizations, to strengthen its efforts in assisting host country Governments to ensure the access of refugees to education, including the introduction into such programmes of elements of education for peace and human rights;

(o) Calls on all States to manifest their international solidarity and burden-sharing with countries of asylum, in particular those with limited

resources, both politically and in other tangible ways which reinforce their capacity to maintain generous asylum policies, through cooperation in conjunction with UNHCR to support the maintenance of agreed standards in respect of the rights of refugees; reiterates the critical importance of development and rehabilitation assistance in addressing some of the causes of refugee situations, as well as their solutions, including voluntary repatriation when deemed appropriate, and also in the context of the development of prevention strategies;

(p) Reiterates the continued importance of resettlement as an instrument of protection and its use as a durable solution to refugee problems in specific circumstances; welcomes the initiative in commissioning an evaluation study and the UNHCR-sponsored consultation on resettlement; and encourages UNHCR to continue the process of dialogue with interested Governments and non-governmental organizations to strengthen its activities in this connection, and to provide regular reports to the Executive Committee;

(q) Reaffirms its Conclusion 48 (XXXVIII), on military or armed attacks on refugee camps and settlements, adopted at its thirty-eighth session, 5/ and reiterates that, the grant of asylum or refuge being a peaceful and humanitarian act, refugee camps and settlements must maintain their exclusively civilian and humanitarian character, and all parties are obliged to abstain from any activity likely to undermine this; condemns all acts which pose a threat to the personal security of refugees and asylum-seekers, and also those which may endanger the safety and stability of States; calls on States of refuge to take all necessary measures to ensure that the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements is maintained and calls on all other States to assist them; and further calls on States of refuge to take effective measures to prevent the infiltration of armed elements, to provide effective physical protection to refugees and asylum-seekers, and to afford UNHCR and other appropriate organizations prompt and unhindered access to them.

2. Conclusion on the prevention and reduction of statelessness and the protection of stateless persons

20. The Executive Committee,

Recognizing the right of everyone to a nationality and the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of one's nationality,

Concerned that statelessness, including the inability to establish one's nationality, may result in displacement,

Stressing that the prevention and reduction of statelessness and the protection of stateless persons are important in the prevention of potential refugee situations,

(a) Acknowledges the responsibilities already entrusted to the High Commissioner for stateless refugees and with respect to the reduction of statelessness, and encourages UNHCR to continue its activities on behalf of stateless persons, as part of its statutory function of providing international protection and of seeking preventive action, as well as its responsibility, entrusted to it by the General Assembly, to undertake the functions foreseen under article 11 of the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness; 6/

(b) Calls upon States to adopt nationality legislation with a view to reducing statelessness, consistent with fundamental principles of international law, in particular by preventing arbitrary deprivation of nationality and by eliminating provisions which permit the renunciation of a nationality without the prior possession or acquisition of another nationality;

(c) Requests UNHCR actively to promote accession to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons 7/ and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, in view of the limited number of States parties to those instruments, as well as to provide to interested States technical and advisory services pertaining to the preparation and implementation of nationality legislation;

(d) Further requests UNHCR actively to promote the prevention and reduction of statelessness through the dissemination of information, and the training of staff and government officials; and to enhance cooperation with other interested organizations;

(e) Invites UNHCR to provide it biennially, beginning at the forty-seventh session of the Executive Committee, with information on activities undertaken on behalf of stateless persons, particularly with regard to the implementation of international instruments and principles relating to statelessness, and including the magnitude of the problem of statelessness.

B. Decisions on programme, administrative and financial matters

1. General decision on programme, administrative and financial matters

21. The Executive Committee,

(a) Confirms that the activities proposed under General and Special Programmes as set out in the overview of UNHCR activities, 1994-1996, 8/ have been found, on review, to be consistent with the Statute of the Office of the High Commissioner, annexed to General Assembly resolution 428 (V) of 14 December 1950; the High Commissioner's "Good Offices" functions, as recognized, promoted or requested by the General Assembly, the Security Council or the Secretary-General; and the relevant provisions of the financial rules for voluntary funds administered by the High Commissioner for Refugees; 9/

(b) Requests the High Commissioner, within the resources available, to respond flexibly and efficiently to the needs currently indicated under 1996 General and Special Programmes which are tentatively estimated at $1.1 billion, and to any other new needs that might arise, bearing in mind the Statute of the Office, the priority to be accorded to statutory activities and the relevant provisions of the financial rules for voluntary funds;

(c) Approves the revised 1995 General Programmes budget amounting to $428,732,500, 10/ and notes that the present estimates for 1995 General and Special Programmes amount to some $1.3 billion;

(d) Also approves the country/area programmes, Other Programmes and the headquarters budgets under the 1996 General Programmes, amounting to $357,434,900, as well as $25 million for the Emergency Fund, $20 million for the Voluntary Repatriation Fund and a Programme Reserve of $42,892,100, 10/ representing 12 per cent of programme activities and constituting a 1996 total

General Programmes budget of $445,327,000, and authorizes the High Commissioner, within this approved level, to effect adjustments in project, country/area programmes, Other Programmes and the headquarters budgets, as may be required by changes affecting the refugee/returnee programmes for which they were planned;

(e) Requests UNHCR to allocate the financial and human resources required for the implementation of the recommendations of the Working Group on Refugee Women and Children adopted by the Executive Committee at its forty-fifth session; 11/

(f) Requests the High Commissioner to keep the Executive Committee regularly informed of developments under both General and Special Programmes, including the uses made, in accord with their established criteria, of the Emergency Fund, the General Allocation for Voluntary Repatriation (henceforth to be known as the Voluntary Repatriation Fund) and the Programme Reserve, and on progress in implementing UNHCR policies under General and Special Programmes;

(g) Notes the report of the Board of Auditors to the General Assembly on the accounts of the voluntary funds administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the year ended 31 December 1994, 12/ the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) on UNHCR activities financed by voluntary funds: report for 1994-1995 and proposed programmes and budget for 1996, 13/ the report of the High Commissioner on UNHCR's inspection and evaluation activities, 14/ and requests to be kept regularly informed on the measures taken to address the recommendations and the observations raised in these various oversight documents;

(h) Expresses serious concern about the observations of the Board of Auditors in its report, 12/ especially those on management issues and, in particular, those relating to continuing problems in regard to the lack of adequate managerial control by UNHCR of programmes implemented by its partners, and asks that the matters raised in the report be reviewed in a systematic fashion by the Standing Committee;

(i) Requests the High Commissioner to initiate a process of informal technical consultations on the question of overhead costs for non-governmental implementing partners, particularly headquarters costs, with a view to having an initial progress review at the time of the first session of the Standing Committee in 1996, and authorizes the Standing Committee, if it sees fit, to decide on this issue in the course of its deliberations during 1996;

(j) Urges Member States and concerned Governments and bodies, in the light of the extensive needs to be addressed by the Office of the High Commissioner, to respond generously and in a spirit of international solidarity and burden-sharing, and in a timely manner, to her appeals for resources;

(k) Notes the intention of the High Commissioner, in her efforts to improve conditions of service in the most difficult duty stations (categories D and E), to extend the provisions of the Fund for International Staff Housing and Basic Amenities as of 1996 to any duty station within those categories, including capital cities, and approves the use of Special Programme funds to replenish the Fund for International Staff Housing and Basic Amenities, to the extent that international staff benefiting from the provisions of the fund are a charge to a particular Special Programme;

(l) Approves the transfer of an additional amount of $150,000 from the 1995 Programme Reserve, and an amount up to $1,200,000 from the 1996 Programme Reserve, to the Fund for International Staff Housing and Basic Amenities;

(m) Approves the creation of the post of Assistant High Commissioner (Policy, Planning and Operations) at the Assistant Secretary-General level, to be funded from voluntary funds, and related staffing (Executive Assistant at the P-4 level and a Secretary at the G-5 level);

(n) Approves the proposal 15/ under which the Office of the High Commissioner would be allowed, exceptionally, to charge to General Programmes the expenditure still to be incurred in relation to remaining tertiary level students, and which cannot be met through the Education Account.

2. Decision on budget structure and governance

22. The Executive Committee,

Having reviewed the report of the informal consultations on budgetary questions, 16/ adopted by the Subcommittee on Administrative and Financial Matters at its inter-sessional meeting on 20 June 1995, decides that:

(a) Any UNHCR budget structure should have as its objectives the following:

(i) Transparency, accountability and managerial control;

(ii) The necessary flexibility to address emergency situations and unexpected changes to programmes;

(iii) Assured funding of statutory activities;

(b) Further streamlining of UNHCR's budget structure should be undertaken bearing in mind the objectives set out in Conclusion 1, so that in a single, coherent budget structure there is a clear indication of overall needs, as well as of needs at the country level, and for Other Programmes and headquarters;

(c) The criteria for the inclusion of activities under General Programmes is that they qualify as statutory; in addition, they should be activities related to situations which have stabilized;

(d) The group of stabilized, statutory activities which constitute the General Programmes shall be a funding priority. A commitment to their full funding would be facilitated by a process of dialogue in which the High Commissioner explains the rationale used for the inclusion of the various activities within the Annual Programme component of the General Programmes;

(e) If, for a given year, all stabilized, statutory activities were not able, in the High Commissioner's judgement, to be included under General Programmes, tne first priority for inclusion should be refugee situations which have stabilized; in giving effect to this decision, the High Commissioner shall, inter alia, bear in mind the relative chances of funding for different activities, depending on the programme category in which they would be placed. The High Commissioner would report to the Executive Committee the considerations which determined a particular course of action;

(f) The Executive Committee should keep under review the criteria governing the Emergency Fund, the Programme Reserve, and the Voluntary Repatriation Fund to ensure that those contribute to the flexibility of the Office's operations; their levels should also be regularly reviewed;

(g) In recognition of the statutory nature of activities on behalf of refugees and, therefore, their potential for inclusion under General Programmes, the Programme Reserve may be used for refugee situations being funded, for various reasons, under Special Programmes. Such a use of the Programme Reserve, would, nevertheless, be limited; it may be used to complement Special Programme funding for refugee situations, provided that the total of all such allocations does not exceed one third of the Programme Reserve in a given year;

(h) In recognition of the importance of voluntary repatriation, and to support repatriation activities which could not be included, for various reasons, under General Programmes, the use of the Voluntary Repatriation Fund should be enhanced by its extension to voluntary repatriation operations for refugees included under Special Programmes; it is proposed that, in a given year, an allocation of up to $10 million could be made for any such voluntary repatriation operation;

(i) The proposed expanded use of the Programme Reserve and the Voluntary Repatriation Fund could require that their levels be raised. It is proposed that, as of 1997:

(i) The Programme Reserve be constituted between 10 and 15 per cent of programmed activities under the Annual Programme for a given year;

(ii) The level of the Voluntary Repatriation Fund for a given year be set between $20 million and 10 per cent of the budgetary estimates for voluntary repatriation for the previous year;

(iii) Within the limits set out above, the High Commissioner would propose the actual levels of the Programme Reserve and the Voluntary Repatriation Fund for approval by the Executive Committee, bearing in mind that the overall level of the proposed General Programmes target should be such as to justify a reasonable expectation of its full funding;

(j) With a view to maximizing the use of the Programme Reserve and the Voluntary Repatriation Fund in any given year, any allocations made from them could be cancelled if sufficient contributions were later received for the relevant activities;

(k) It is proposed to extend the use of the Working Capital and Guarantee Fund to guarantee budgetary increases in the headquarters component of General Programmes, not exceeding 2 per cent of the approved General Programmes total target, that may result from increased headquarters costs directly due to exchange-rate fluctuations. The Executive Committee would thus allow the General Programmes approved budgetary target to rise by up to 2 per cent, if this was necessary to accommodate such increased costs. The adjustment of the General Programmes budget target in accord with the above provisions, and related accounting adjustments, would take place at the end of a calendar year. If such a use had to be made of the Working Capital and Guarantee Fund, it would be replenished in the subsequent year in accordance with the provisions of the Financial Rules;

(l) In addition to the broad review of General and Special Programmes at the time of the Executive Committee, inter-sessional meetings shall consider updates on programme needs and funding; at inter-sessional meetings, there shall also be a review of all country programmes (General and Special) in a particular region or regions (e.g. Asia/South-West Asia, North Africa and the Middle East; Europe/Americas; Africa), and of any Special Programmes covering a number of countries in the region(s);

(m) The regular, systematic review of UNHCR programmes at the country level by the Executive Committee at inter-sessional meetings shall be based on agreed documentation (see below), and will include presentations by the senior staff of the Bureau concerned;

(n) The uses made of the Emergency Fund, the Programme Reserve and the Voluntary Repatriation Fund shall be reviewed by the Executive Committee at its annual and inter-sessional meetings at the time of each of the programme reviews mentioned in (m) above, to ensure that their use is in accord with the governing criteria;

(o) The wording of the decision related to General and Special Programmes needs and resources adopted at the annual (or any other) session of the Executive Committee shall better reflect the enhanced governance exercised by the Executive Committee over those Programmes;

(p) Within the broad framework of oversight of the work of UNHCR, the Executive Committee, in the course of its annual session and at inter-sessional meetings, shall consider, according to an agreed timetable, the various reports on audits, programmes and evaluations and on the work of the UNHCR inspection and evaluation service, as well as UNHCR's response to those reports;

(q) Programme documentation should be so presented that the focus is principally on countries/areas with a clear picture of programmes at the country level;

(r) Programme documentation (covering both General and Special Programmes) for given countries/areas should be concise (not exceeding six pages) and should be primarily focused on and offering justification for programmes in a planning year; the current and prior years' activities shall be addressed only to explain any significant variations from estimates and planned activities. Special Programmes covering more than one country will also be presented separately, with corresponding consolidated tables showing estimates and expenditure;

(s) The presentation of the annual accounts should be improved; in particular, the number of Special Programmes accounted for individually in the annex to financial statement 2, which sets out income and expenditure for Special Programmes, shall be expanded to include the most important of those which are currently reported under "Other Trust Funds"; to the extent possible, "Other Trust Funds" should be identified by region;

(t) Among the steps to be taken to further enhance UNHCR's budgetary structure and related matters, study and informal consultations will be undertaken in relation to the following:

(i) The further adaptation and improvement of the budget structure, as provided for in (b) above;

(ii) The categories/sectors for reporting on UNHCR's activities, including the possibility of quantifying aspects of UNHCR's protection activities;

(iii) The presentation of budgets and reporting on programme activities, bearing in mind the need for conciseness and clarity, and the observations of the ACABQ in this regard;

(iv) Review of UNHCR's current computer systems and databases and action to ensure that they are adapted to UNHCR's budgeting and reporting needs;

(v) Ways to ensure better linkages between the presentation of UNHCR's budgets in the United Nations biennium budget in support of the medium-term plan and the current UNHCR annual budgets presented to the Executive Committee;

(vi) Ways to ensure a better funding base for UNHCR activities;

(vii) Review of UNHCR's Financial Rules, including the provisions governing General and Special Programmes.

C. Decision on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance

23. The Executive Committee

(a) Welcomes resolution 1995/56, adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its 1995 substantive session, on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance;

(b) Decides that the first inter-sessional meeting of the Standing Committee in 1996 should give specific consideration to the resolution and its significance for the work of UNHCR;

(c) Requests the High Commissioner to submit to that Standing Committee meeting a proposal as to how the various aspects of the resolution relevant to the work of UNHCR might most effectively be reviewed in the course of the inter-sessional meetings in 1996;

(d) Calls on UNHCR to pursue in the inter-agency Standing Committee the issues raised in the resolution;

(e) Urges Governments to ensure that the relevant issues are given priority consideration in the governing bodies of the other agencies concerned.

D. Conclusion on refugee women

24. The Executive Committee,

Having considered the report on refugee women: the achievements and the challenges, 17/ presented to the thirty-fifth meeting of the Subcommittee on Administrative and Financial Matters,

(a) Commends the Office of the High Commissioner for its role in ensuring a comprehensive presentation of the situation of refugee women in the Beijing Platform for Action;

(b) Notes the guidelines on preventing and responding to sexual violence against refugees;

(c) Reaffirms previous conclusions dealing with the protection of and assistance to refugee women, and in particular the recommendations of the Working Group; 18/

(d) Notes with concern that field implementation of the policy and guidelines continues to be unsystematic;

(e) Requests the High Commissioner to prepare a framework for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action which will form the basis of future UNHCR planning on refugee women's issues as well as reports to the Executive Committee and the Commission on the Status of Women;

(f) Calls on the High Commissioner to report to the Executive Committee at its forty-seventh session on the delivery of the implementation framework, with particular emphasis on field implementation of the policy and guidelines and on UNHCR implementation of the recommendations of the Working Group referred to above.

E. Conclusion on refugees and the environment

25. The Executive Committee,

Noting with appreciation the progress report on the guidelines on refugees and the environment, 19/ presented to the thirty-fifth meeting of the Subcommittee on Administrative and Financial Matters,

(a) Approves the reformulated environmental policy and notes the proposed operational outcomes which will enable UNHCR to make a more focused contribution to resolving refugee-related environmental problems;

(b) Requests the High Commissioner to revise the interim guidelines to give effect to the reformulated policy;

(c) Also requests the High Commissioner to promote and enhance coordination and collaboration with host Governments, donors, relevant United Nations organizations, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and other actors concerned to address refugee-related environmental problems in a more integrated and effective manner;

(d) Calls on the High Commissioner to keep the Executive Committee informed through its Standing Committee on the implementation of this policy, in particular of the financial implications and of environmental actions initiated in the field, and to present a progress report on the results achieved to the Executive Committee at its forty-eighth session.

F. Conclusion on the UNHCR-NGO Partnership in Action process

26. The Executive Committee,

Recalling the conclusion on the Partnership in Action (PARINAC) process adopted by the Executive Committee at its forty-fifth session, 20/

Noting with appreciation the report on PARINAC 21/ presented to the thirty-fourth meeting of the Subcommittee on Administrative and Financial Matters,

(a) Reaffirms the importance of the Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action, adopted at the Global Conference in June 1994, as a joint agenda for humanitarian action;

(b) Welcomes the establishment of UNHCR and non-governmental organization focal points to facilitate communication and coordination;

(c) Encourages UNHCR and non-governmental organizations to continue to pursue activities in the field and at Headquarters, to enhance their partnership in protection and assistance;

(d) Encourages non-governmental organizations, Governments and UNHCR to continue to identify areas in the Plan of Action in which they can cooperate further to implement particular recommendations;

(e) Requests the High Commissioner to report to the Executive Committee at its forty-seventh session on the progress made on the follow-up to the PARINAC process.

G. Regional conclusions

1. Conclusion on the situation of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa

27. The Executive Committee,

Having considered the situation of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa,

(a) Recalls the conclusion of the Executive Committee at its forty-fifth session on the situation of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa 22/ and acknowledges with appreciation the statement of the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) at the opening of the forty-sixth session of the Executive Committee;

(b) Notes with concern the effects of political instability, internal strife, human rights violations, foreign interventions and poverty in increasing the number of refugees and displaced persons in some areas of Africa;

(c) Expresses its appreciation and strong support for those African Governments and local populations which, in spite of general deterioration of socio-economic conditions and overstretched national resources, continue to accept the additional burdens imposed by increasing numbers of refugees and displaced persons, in compliance with relevant asylum principles;

(d) Expresses its concern regarding instances in some parts of Africa where the fundamental principle of asylum is jeopardized as a result of unlawful expulsion, refoulement or other threats to life, physical security, dignity and well-being;

(e) Welcomes the strengthening of UNHCR cooperation with the OAU at all levels, and urges the two organizations, with relevant subregional bodies, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, the international community and the concerned Governments, to increase their efforts in working out strategies and implementation of solutions to the root causes of the problems of displacement in Africa;

(f) Further recalls General Assembly resolution 49/7 of 25 October 1994, which called for the convening of a regional conference for assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in the Great Lakes region, welcomes the initiatives of the High Commissioner to implement that resolution, and endorses the Bujumbura Plan of Action adopted in February 1995, as a framework for solution-oriented approaches to the humanitarian problems in the Great Lakes region;

(g) Calls on UNHCR to intensify its protection activities by, inter alia, supporting African Governments through appropriate training of relevant officers and other capacity-building activities, disseminating information about refugee instruments and principles, and providing financial, technical and advisory services to accelerate the enactment/amendment and implementation of legislation relating to refugees;

(h) Expresses appreciation for the efforts of Governments and for the important work being done by UNHCR, United Nations agencies, the IOM, non-governmental organizations and other cooperating bodies on the implementation of voluntary repatriation of refugees in Africa; and calls on UNHCR, in conjunction with OAU and concerned Governments, subregional groupings and other interested parties, actively to continue to seek sustainable solutions to the refugee problem in Africa, in particular through facilitating voluntary return in a dignified and orderly manner;

(i) Encourages UNHCR to continue to cooperate with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in emergency humanitarian situations in Africa;

(j) Appeals to Governments, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and the international community to create conditions that facilitate return and the early rehabilitation and reintegration of refugees;

(k) Commends the Governments of the Great Lakes region and the High Commissioner for Refugees on their initiatives to promote repatriation in the framework of tripartite agreements on voluntary repatriation of refugees in the region;

(l) Calls on UNHCR, in conjunction with host Governments, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and the international community, to undertake early assessment of negative impacts of large refugee concentrations on the hosting communities with a view to initiating timely and concrete measures to prevent damage and to assist in its repair, especially damage to the environment and ecosystems in host countries caused by mass refugee influxes;

(m) Notes with satisfaction the voluntary return of some 1.7 million Mozambicans to their homeland following near completion of UNHCR's three-year repatriation and reintegration operations, and looks forward to other programmes to assist the voluntary repatriation of other refugees in Africa;

(n) Expresses concern over the long stay of refugees in certain African countries and calls upon the High Commissioner to keep under review her programmes in those countries, taking into account the increasing requirements in that region.

2. Conclusion on the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees

28. The Executive Committee,

Reaffirming the decisions of the fifth and sixth meetings of the Steering Committee of the International Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees, particularly concerning the target dates for the end of activities of the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees (CPA),

Expressing grave concern at the decline in voluntary repatriation of Indo-Chinese camp populations in 1995 and the large number of remaining Indo-Chinese in camps in the region,

(a) Calls on UNHCR to convene in the region a meeting among members of the Steering Committee at the earliest appropriate time, preferably by the end of December 1995, in order to assess the current situation and to consider necessary measures and durable solutions to ensure successful conclusion of the CPA;

(b) Strongly appeals to the international community to provide necessary support for the repatriation of Indo-Chinese camp populations under both voluntary repatriation and orderly return programmes, as well as developmental assistance to the countries of origin necessary for reintegration of all returnees;

(c) Notes with appreciation that the countries of origin continue to facilitate the work of UNHCR and other appropriate intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations engaged in providing assistance to returnees, and calls on those countries to continue to ensure reasonable access to returnees by such intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations;

(d) Supports UNHCR in its active role in the promotion of repatriation programmes and in its continued monitoring of the safety of all returnees, consistent with the decisions of the fifth and sixth Steering Committee meetings;

(e) Requests all parties concerned to continue to cooperate fully in the implementation of the relevant memoranda of understanding and agreements relating to the repatriation of Indo-Chinese camp populations.

3. Conclusion on voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan

29. The Executive Committee,

Recalling the conclusion on voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan adopted by the Executive Committee at its forty-fifth session, 23/

(a) Recognizes the grave burden imposed on Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran by the continuing presence of large numbers of Afghan refugees, especially with the decline in the level of support extended by the international community, and calls for continued international support for the Afghan refugees in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran and for their early repatriation to their homes in safety and dignity;

(b) Notes with satisfaction the increase in UNHCR activities in the safe areas of Afghanistan that refugees are returning to and the importance of those activities in creating conditions conducive to the continued return of refugees;

(c) Calls upon the international community to support a comprehensive approach to the return of the Afghan refugees and the rehabilitation of affected areas;

(d) Urges the international community and the Governments of the region to increase their support for the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission for Afghanistan and the OIC aimed at working out a political solution to the Afghan crisis, thus allowing for the return of the Afghan refugees and displaced persons to their homes in safety and dignity;

(e) Calls upon the international community to continue its generous support for the humanitarian programmes in Afghanistan outlined in the consolidated inter-agency appeal for emergency humanitarian and rehabilitation assistance to Afghanistan (1 October 1995-30 September 1996);

(f) Calls upon the High Commissioner to maintain the activities of her Office in Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries still hosting a large number of refugees and to continue the collaboration of her Office with the Governments concerned, other international humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations for the provision of assistance to refugee areas in keeping with needs in those countries until such time as the refugees are able to return to their homes in safety and dignity;

(g) Requests the High Commissioner to work closely with the Afghan authorities so as to ensure that the basic rights of the returnees and displaced persons are respected and that appropriate measures aimed at redressing possible violations are carried out;

(h) Calls upon the High Commissioner to extend the activities of her Office in Afghanistan to other areas of potential return, working in close cooperation with the United Nations agencies through collaborative ventures which will maximize benefits to communities receiving returnees;

(i) Urges the High Commissioner to continue to play a supportive and catalytic role to mobilize the involvement of international and multilateral organizations as part of the rehabilitation strategy to sustain repatriation.

4. Conclusion on the CIS Conference Process

30. The Executive Committee,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 49/173 of 23 December 1994,

Reiterating its support for the High Commissioner's consultations, which should lead to a regional conference to promote and develop a comprehensive strategy to address problems of refugees, returnees, displaced persons and other forms of involuntary displacement in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and other relevant neighbouring States,

(a) Notes with appreciation the information note on the CIS Conference Process presented to the forty-sixth session of the Executive Committee 24/ and the progress achieved so far through the preparatory process in which the scope and objectives of the Conference and definitions, as well as causes and effects of population movements in the region, have been discussed in the first meeting of experts, the steering group and various subregional meetings;

(b) Supports the preparatory process, to be continued in transparency, leading to the elaboration of a declaration of principles and a programme of action for submission to the regional conference to be convened in 1996;

(c) Welcomes the establishment of a common secretariat for the preparation of the conference comprising UNHCR, the IOM and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights;

(d) Calls on all States concerned and relevant intergovernmental organizations to participate actively in the preparatory process;

(e) Urges Governments which have not yet done so to contribute to the secretariat in order to assist it properly to support the conference process;

(f) Welcomes consultations launched by the conference secretariat with non-governmental organizations and independent actors, and encourages their participation in the consultative process and its follow-up;

(g) Requests the High Commissioner to report to the Executive Committee at its forty-seventh session on the outcome and follow-up of the conference.

5. Conclusion on humanitarian issues in the territory of the former Yugoslavia

31. The Executive Committee

(a) Expresses its utmost concern for the fate of refugees and displaced and missing persons within and from the territory of the former Yugoslavia;

(b) Emphasizes the importance of continued international protection and the ongoing need for humanitarian assistance;

(c) Welcomes the ongoing peace efforts and notes with satisfaction that fundamental humanitarian and human rights principles are to be included in the comprehensive peace agreements as indispensable elements to achieve a lasting peace;

(d) Recalls UNHCR's mandated role in the protection of and assistance to returnees, and supports the retention by UNHCR of its lead United Nations humanitarian agency role in the post-settlement period;

(e) Recognizes that voluntary repatriation, when it is feasible, is the ideal solution to the refugee problem, and calls upon Governments of the countries of origin to create conditions for and to ensure the organized return of refugees and displaced persons in safety and dignity in a phased and coordinated manner, in cooperation with and with the assistance of UNHCR, the host countries and the international community as a whole;

(f) Reiterates the urgent appeals by the international community to grant relevant organizations immediate access to all detained persons and to provide full information on the fate of those unaccounted for;

(g) Calls upon the international donor community to continue to contribute generously to the ongoing humanitarian efforts, as well as those humanitarian and rehabilitation programmes to be undertaken within the framework of a possible peace settlement.

H. Decisions on Executive Committee working methods

1. Decision on Executive Committee working methods

32. The Executive Committee,

Recalling decisions taken at its special meeting held on 20 June 1995, 25/ and noting the report of the Working Group on Executive Committee Working Methods 26/ and the recommendations of the Subcommittee on Administrative and Financial Matters thereon, 27/ decides that:

(a) The Committee will reconstitute its annual cycle of meetings to comprise one annual plenary session and a number of inter-sessional meetings of a Standing Committee of the Whole. This Standing Committee will replace the current Subcommittee of the Whole on International Protection, the Subcommittee on Administrative and Financial Matters, and the informal meetings of the Executive Committee;

(b) The work of the Standing Committee will be structured in such a way as to facilitate discussion of protection, programme and financial issues, as well as complex questions that cut across those categories;

(c) The Standing Committee will meet about four times a year, with the exact number of meetings to be determined by the requirements of good governance;

(d) The penultimate annual meeting of the Standing Committee will focus on questions of international protection and their programme implications;

(e) A meeting of the Standing Committee will take place at least three weeks prior to the annual plenary in order to focus on the preparation of the draft decisions and conclusions which will be presented to the plenary for adoption, following further consultations, in the framework of the Standing Committee's report, the Note on International Protection and other relevant documentation;

(f) The annual plenary session of the Executive Committee will be held in mid-October so as to facilitate the preparation of draft plenary decisions and conclusions by the Standing Committee;

(g) The agenda of the annual plenary session of the Executive Committee will be reformed to ensure more focused policy discussion, clear linkage with the work of the Standing Committee and more effective decision-making;

(h) The general debate will be discontinued and be replaced by a debate on a focused annual theme to be selected in consultation with the High Commissioner and the Standing Committee at a meeting held at least three months before the annual plenary session;

(i) The discontinuation of the general debate should not hinder Governments from bringing pressing refugee concerns in their own countries to the attention of the Executive Committee, and such statements will be accommodated on a flexible basis, within the agenda item most appropriate;

(j) Special consideration will be given to Ministers or other government officials of similar rank, who will, upon request, be accorded the opportunity to make a statement on their concerns at an early stage of the meeting;

(k) The Executive Committee, at its annual plenary session, will formally identify issues to be covered in the work programme of the Standing Committee and review the Standing Committee's work at its following session;

(l) The Standing Committee will be authorized to add items, as appropriate, to its agenda, in addition to those referred to it by the plenary;

(m) Executive Committee members will meet at an early date after the annual plenary session to establish the calendar of Standing Committee meetings;

(n) The reformed agenda of the annual plenary will be structured as follows:

(i) Opening of the session;

(ii) Election of officers;

(iii) Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters;

(iv) Annual theme;

(v) Reports on the work of the Standing Committee on international protection and programme, administrative and financial matters;

(vi) Consideration and adoption of programme budgets;

(vii) Reports relating to programme oversight;

(viii) Matters for consideration by the inter-sessional meetings of the Standing Committee;

(ix) Any other business;

(x) Adoption of report;

(o) The annual session of the Executive Committee will be contained within the current time-frame of one week;

(p) A ten-minute time-limit will be strictly applied to statements made under the debate on the annual theme and a five-minute limit to interventions made under other items of the agenda;

(q) The annual plenary session will adopt the general decision on programme, administrative and financial matters, the general conclusion on international protection and the programme of work of the Standing Committee;

(r) The Executive Committee will delegate to the Standing Committee authority to adopt decisions and conclusions on matters included in its annual programme of work;

(s) Such delegation will include the authority to approve adjustments of up to 10 per cent to the General Programmes budget; where adjustments in excess of 10 per cent are recommended by the Standing Committee, a special meeting of the Executive Committee will be called in accordance with rule 1 of the Rules of Procedure; 28/

(t) All decisions and conclusions adopted by the Standing Committee will be reported to the plenary and included in its annual report to the General Assembly;

(u) The Standing Committee will prepare, on the basis of its own discussions, draft decisions and conclusions scheduled for adoption at the annual plenary session;

(v) Drafts of decisions and conclusions, including those introduced by member Governments, must be made available by the secretariat sufficiently in advance of any Standing Committee meeting for consultation to take place with capitals;

(w) A central role will be played by the Executive Committee's Rapporteur in the preparation of decisions and conclusions for adoption by the Executive Committee or its Standing Committee;

(x) The Rapporteur will need to maintain a flexible consultative arrangement to ensure consensus on decisions and conclusions;

(y) The number of decisions and conclusions will be streamlined and limited to items which have been the subject of focused debate in either the plenary or the Standing Committee;

(z) In the interest of brevity, the number of preambular paragraphs to decisions and conclusions of the Executive Committee and Standing Committee will be reduced to the greatest possible extent;

(aa) In order to facilitate effective decision-making, all documentation prepared for Standing Committee meetings must be available to delegations at least three weeks prior to any meeting;

(bb) Consideration of any agenda item on which a Standing Committee decision or conclusion is required will be postponed to a later meeting in cases where documentation is not made available at least three weeks before the Standing Committee meeting at which it is scheduled for consideration;

(cc) Where exceptional circumstances justify the late issue of any document, the above requirements may be waived by the Chairman of the Standing Committee;

(dd) A clear distinction will be introduced between information papers and those requiring substantive discussion and endorsement by the Executive Committee or the Standing Committee;

(ee) Where a decision or conclusion of the Executive Committee or Standing Committee is sought, each document will conclude with a proposed text for adoption by the Committee;

(ff) Executive Committee and Standing Committee documents will be limited in principle to six single-spaced pages, including the text of any accompanying decision or conclusion;

(gg) Any policy documents which exceed the six-page limit will be accompanied by a one-page executive summary to facilitate the work of delegations;

(hh) The six-page limit for Executive Committee and Standing Committee documents will also be applied to country chapters;

(ii) All policy documents and other documentation of general interest submitted to the annual plenary session of the Executive Committee will continue to be issued in the official languages;

(jj) In order to ensure that delegations receive in a timely fashion the translated versions of those documents to which they themselves accord priority, as well as to reduce costs, country chapters relating to UNHCR's programme budgets will be issued automatically only in the working languages of the Executive Committee, while individual chapters will be made available in other official languages upon selective request by any member delegation;

(kk) The above decisions for the reform of the Executive Committee's working methods will be implemented and their full implications thoroughly drawn before consideration is given to increased participation by observers in the work of the plenary or Standing Committee;

(ll) The above decisions will be implemented on an experimental basis for one annual cycle of meetings, and their application will be reviewed at the end of the forty-seventh session in October 1996.

2. Decision on the introduction of Russian as an official language of the Executive Committee

33. The Executive Committee,

Having considered the High Commissioner's note on the introduction of Russian as an official language of the Executive Committee, 29/

(a) Welcomes the election of the Russian Federation as a member of the Executive Committee;

(b) Emphasizes the importance of Russian in facilitating the work of UNHCR and implementation of the provisions of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, notably in the Commonwealth of Independent States;

(c) Decides, subject to budgetary approval by the General Assembly, to introduce Russian as an official language of the Executive Committee;

(d) Also decides to forward the matter to the General Assembly for budgetary approval.

3. Decision on the programme of work of the Standing Committee in 1996

34. The Executive Committee,

Having reviewed the issues before it at its forty-sixth session, including the report of the Subcommittee of the Whole on International Protection 30/ and of the Subcommittee on Administrative and Financial Matters, 31/ and bearing in mind the report of the Working Group on Executive Committee Working Methods, 32/

(a) Decides to include the following issues in the programme of work of its Standing Committee in 1996, and requests that UNHCR include in its documentation on each item the relevant audit and ACABQ recommendations, as well as steps taken to implement those recommendations and related Executive Committee decisions and conclusions:

(i) International protection:

a. Note on international protection;

b. Follow-up to the conclusions on international protection;

c. The return of persons not in need of international protection;

(ii) Programmes and funding matters:

a. Updates on programmes, funding and results, to include:

- Region by region reviews of General and Special Programmes;

- Reviews of the use of the emergency fund, programme reserve and the voluntary repatriation fund;

b. Implementation and results of UNHCR policies under General and Special Programmes;

c. Follow-up to the conclusions of the informal consultations on budget structure;

(iii) Coordination questions:

a. Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance;

(iv) Management, financial and human resources matters:

a. Implementing partners:

- Managerial control and monitoring;

- Overhead costs, including headquarters costs of non-governmental organizations;

b. Reports relating to oversight and evaluation;

c. Human resources policies;

d. Administrative matters, including headquarters structure and staffing levels;

e. Other resource management, including capital and information management;

(v) Work of the Executive Committee:

a. Selection of the annual theme to be considered at the forty-seventh session of the Executive Committee;

b. Authorizes the Standing Committee to add items, as appropriate, to its inter-sessional programme of work;

c. Calls on the Standing Committee to report on its work to the forty-seventh session of the Executive Committee.

I. Government observer participation in 1995-1996

35. The Executive Committee considered and approved applications by the following Government observer delegations for participation in inter-sessional meetings of the Executive Committee from October 1995 to October 1996:

Afghanistan, Angola, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Honduras, Iceland, Iraq, Ireland, Jordan, Kenya, Mauritania, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

IV. PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

36. The provisional agenda of the forty-seventh session of the Executive Committee is contained in subparagraph 32 (n) above.

Notes

1/ United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, No. 2545.

2/ Ibid., vol. 606, No. 8791.

3/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 12A (A/44/12/Add.1), para. 24.

4/ Ibid., Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 12A (A/45/12/Add.1), para. 19.

5/ Ibid., Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 12A (A/42/12/Add.1), para. 206.

6/ See United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 989, p. 175.

7/ Ibid., vol. 360, p. 117.

8/ A/AC.96/846, parts I-VII.

9/ A/AC.96/503/Rev.5.

10/ See A/AC.96/845, table III.

11/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 12A (A/49/12/Add.1), para. 22.

12/ A/AC.96/853.

13/ A/AC.96/854.

14/ A/AC.96/852 and Add.1.

15/ See EC/1995/SC.2/81.

16/ EC/1995/SC.2/75.

17/ EC/1995/SC.2/77.

18/ EC/1994/SC.2/CRP.23/Rev.1.

19/ EC/1995/SC.2/79.

20/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 12A (A/49/12/Add.1), para. 35.

21/ EC/1995/SC.2/CRP.20.

22/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 12A (A/49/12/Add.1), para. 29.

23/ Ibid., para. 32.

24/ A/AC.96/855 and Corr.1.

25/ A/AC.96/843.

26/ EC/1995/SC.2/76.

27/ EC/1995/SC.2/CRP.30.

28/ A/AC.96/187/Rev.4.

29/ EC/1995/SC.2/80.

30/ A/AC.96/858.

31/ A/AC.96/859.

32/ EC/1995/SC.2/76.

ANNEX

Opening statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme at its forty-sixth session

(Monday, 16 October 1995)

I am pleased to welcome you to the forty-sixth session of the Executive Committee. May I extend a special welcome to the delegations of Bangladesh, India and the Russian Federation. Their presence here, at their first regular session of the Executive Committee, symbolizes the global nature of refugee concerns and the universal support for the mandate of my Office.

I should like to thank the outgoing Chairman, Mr. Ahmad Kamal of Pakistan, who, despite the competing claims on his time in New York, has made a special effort to come to Geneva to open the meeting. Let me congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the new Bureau on your election. As the representative of a country which has been a strong and constant supporter of UNHCR, and as a treasured friend of the Office, we look forward to continue working closely with you.

I would also like to welcome our special guest, Mr. Salim A. Salim, Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). His presence here today is testimony to the close cooperation which the OAU and UNHCR have enjoyed for more than a quarter of a century. It is also indicative of the importance of Africa to the work of my Office. Africa hosts more refugees and internally displaced persons than any other continent. Africa is also the scene of voluntary repatriation today. Of the close to 2 million refugees who returned home in 1994, 1.5 million were in Africa. Out of 18 planned repatriations in 1996, 9 are foreseen in Africa. I count on the OAU's conflict-resolution mechanism and its leadership to help create and maintain the momentum on the voluntary repatriation of refugees.

UNHCR has been confronted with massive emergencies every year since I became High Commissioner in 1991. In recent weeks, almost half a million people were displaced by war and violence in the former Yugoslavia. The urgency of saving lives in the course of the past year has been matched by the pressures to find solutions and the dilemmas of ensuring protection, whether in refugee camps or returnee communities, in situations of open conflict or fragile peace. In a world in which war deliberately targets civilians and peace fails to bring security, UNHCR's dual mandate of international protection and solutions has been severely tested this past year in almost every region.

In the aftermath of the emergency in the Great Lakes region, we sought to respond to the strong pressure for early return, while continuing to take care of 2 million refugees and remaining vigilant to new risks of displacement. In Angola, thanks to the implementation of the political settlement, we have launched our operation to assist some 311,000 refugees to return home by mid-1997. In Sudan, we have embarked on voluntary repatriation to Eritrea and Ethiopia. In West Africa, we have tried to nurture solutions. In contrast, in South-East Asia, Central America, Tajikistan and Mozambique, where solutions have taken root successfully, we have grappled with ways to phase down or move out. In the Middle East, we have been encouraged by the evolution of peace and remain ready to play our role in line with our mandate and in cooperation with other organizations. Elsewhere, the picture has been mixed. In Afghanistan,

renewed violence has set back the flow of repatriation. In former Yugoslavia, peace talks have offered the first glimmer of hope in months, although I fear that, in the short term, there could be more displacement as people are forced to move to accommodate territorial adjustments.

The thrust of these various developments has been to put the issue of solutions, and more precisely repatriation, even higher on UNHCR's agenda. One important statistic shows the extent to which we have shifted from a bias on exile to a focus on the country of origin. Of the 27.4 million persons of concern to UNHCR today, only about 14.5 million are refugees. The rest include 4 million returnees, 5.4 million internally displaced persons and 3.5 million civilians affected by conflict. Almost half of the persons of concern to UNHCR are thus to be found within their own country.

These statistics also reveal that while the number of refugees has declined, the numbers and categories of those in need of international protection and assistance are in fact expanding. They illustrate that the pursuit of solutions without regard to protection will not take us far and that international protection is a more complex task than merely assuring asylum. The two arms of my mandate are fundamentally linked. The objective of protection must be, not to perpetuate exile, but to encourage solutions. But if solutions are not approached from the perspective of protection - in other words, if they fail to protect the basic human rights of the individuals - then they will be neither effective nor permanent. Extending from flight, through exile, to return and reintegration, protection principles provide the overarching framework for the prevention and solution of refugee problems.

In my statement today I should like to focus on our efforts to develop a new paradigm of protection oriented towards solutions. How do we seize the political impulse for solutions while retaining the humanitarian imperative for protection? What are the prospects and the possibilities which inspire us, the dilemmas and difficulties which confront us? Externally, what are the partnerships we must cultivate? Internally, what are the management priorities and structures we must establish?

Dilemmas of protection

One of the most difficult problems confronting my Office in recent years has been the decline of asylum, even on a temporary basis. Many countries are openly admitting their weariness with large numbers of refugees and blatantly closing borders. Others are more insidiously introducing laws and procedures which effectively deny admission to their territory. This year was particularly significant in that developments in the Great Lakes region demonstrated that even the proverbial African generosity towards refugees has become strained.

The threat to asylum has taken on a global character, affecting both the developing and the industrialized world. In major incidents in Africa and Europe in recent months, borders have been closed to refugees fleeing danger. Thousands of refugees and displaced persons have found themselves caught in the midst of conflict and violence. Some have been killed, others have been brutally attacked and terrorized or forced to return to danger.

International protection reflects the convergence of humanitarian and political interests. In many circumstances, asylum is not only the most powerful tool of protection but also the most pragmatic, especially when provided on a temporary basis. This is why UNHCR requested Governments to

provide temporary protection to those fleeing the conflict in former Yugoslavia and has urged them to continue it for the time being. The possibility of temporary asylum encourages a phased and orderly approach to repatriation and thereby assures greater stability for peace and progress in the country of origin. I call upon the members of the Executive Committee to support our endeavours to ensure respect for the institution of asylum, at least on a temporary basis, for those fleeing persecution, conflict and civil strife.

I am fully conscious that the decline of asylum cannot be arrested simply by appealing to the generosity of States. It must be addressed, on the one hand, by action to enable countries to receive refugees and, on the other, by initiatives to find solutions to refugee problems and where possible to prevent the outbreak of new crises.

Peoples and Governments around the world have shown and continue to show remarkable hospitality to millions of refugees, despite their own political, social, economic and environmental constraints. The costs of hosting large numbers of refugees are not always measurable in dollar terms. UNHCR's refugee assistance does not redress the collateral impact of refugees on the host countries. If Governments are to continue to grant asylum, greater attention must be given by the international community to addressing the concerns of affected host communities and strengthening their capacity and willingness to cope with population movements.

One area which has attracted attention in the aftermath of the Rio Summit has been environmental damage caused by large concentrations of refugee population. In the light of those concerns, UNHCR is proposing a reformulation of its environmental policy. The objective is to make the environmental dimension an integral aspect of our operations.

Nor can we ignore the security implications of large-scale refugee flows. Indeed, the security dimension of today's refugee problems underscores both the decline of asylum and the drive towards solutions. In an effort to assist Governments to meet their international obligation to refugees, UNHCR strengthened the capacity to maintain law and order in the refugee camps in the United Republic of Tanzania and eastern Zaire. During my visit to Kivu in early September, I saw for myself the improved situation, thanks to the Zairian security personnel deployed with UNHCR's assistance and the international security advisers seconded to UNHCR by Governments. Insecurity in refugee camps is not only a matter of law and order but also one of maintaining the civilian character of the camps, which is a fundamental principle of international protection. Although the primary obligation lies with the authorities granting asylum, UNHCR will do whatever it can within its mandate and in line with its expertise to help ensure respect for the principle, including seeking the relocation of camps if necessary.

The challenges of solutions

Increased assistance to host countries alone, however, will not meet the demands of maintaining asylum. Whether in South-East Asia or Central Africa, the Caribbean or the Balkans, the universal reality is that protection abroad cannot be assured without a parallel effort to find solutions at home. As refugees grow more impatient to return home, as Governments become more reluctant to grant asylum, and donors find other calls on their purse, how long can we wait for solutions to materialize? What are the parameters of UNHCR's mandate to promote solutions? What are the challenges we face in pursuing them?

In some parts of the world, political events may be turning the tide away from human suffering to homecoming. In others, it may take longer. However, in none of these instances is return likely to be under ideal conditions. In many it will be dogged by political insecurity and economic uncertainty. Anti-personnel mines are a major obstacle to returns. I am therefore disappointed the Vienna conference failed to make progress on this issue.

For UNHCR, the challenge of solutions lies in seizing the opportunities, while remaining alert to the dangers. It lies in ensuring that protection principles, not political expediency, guide the pursuit of humanitarian solutions. Working closely with political and peace-keeping operations, for instance in Rwanda, Liberia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), we have sought to inject humanitarian concerns into the political discourse and to reinforce our capacity to carry out our protection and assistance activities. The partnership has been fruitful, but obviously the humanitarian and strategic objectives have not always coincided. The relationship, particularly with the military, has at times created pressures on our humanitarian mandate.

In some cases, as in Angola and Tajikistan, we have reaped the benefits of our cooperation. In a few, such as the Caucasus, humanitarian solutions have become hostage to the lack of progress on parallel political negotiations, although I believe we are playing a meaningful role in that subregion by assisting displaced populations. In other regions, for other reasons, the situation of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal continues to suffer from a stalemate, while repatriation to Afghanistan has stalled, prolonging the refugee burden of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. We need to look at fresh strategies to break the impasse.

Ultimately, the challenge of solutions is not only to ensure that the humanitarian issues are on the political agenda but that those who return feel secure in their own homes.

New dimensions of protection

Protection needs do not disappear when people repatriate. On the contrary, they tend to resurface in more complex forms in the country of origin, as the problem of the internally displaced has shown, whether in Rwanda or the Russian Federation. This has given a new dimension to our protection responsibilities and has led us to interpret our mandate for solutions in a protection-oriented but proactive manner. Just as we no longer wait for refugees to cross the border but are increasingly involved with the internally displaced in order to avert outflow, we can no longer passively wait for conditions to change so that refugees can volunteer to return. Instead, we must work actively to create the conditions conducive to their safe return. It is important, therefore, that the protection debate moves on from interpreting voluntary repatriation solely in terms of the expression of individual will to the creation of conditions of safety - in the refugee camps, in the reception centres and in the home areas.

Rwanda shows the dilemmas of this approach, but also the way in which we have sought to overcome them. It is clear that in the longer term, the answer in the Great Lakes region lies in a comprehensive political solution. In the short term, however, I do believe that progress on humanitarian issues through voluntary and safe return can contribute to the political process, while easing the humanitarian crisis. It is this conviction that guided us in organizing the Bujumbura conference jointly with the OAU last February. The Bujumbura Plan of

Action provides a comprehensive framework for solutions involving countries of asylum and origin as well as other interested Governments.

Although I was disappointed at the failure to implement the Plan earlier, I believe that my recent mission, followed by the convening of the Tripartite Commission in Geneva at the end of September, has helped to create a momentum in favour of voluntary repatriation. Zaire has made clear its intention to deal with those who block repatriation. Rwanda for its part has unequivocally recognized the right of the refugees to return and expressed its commitment to improve the reception and security of returnees, including full access for international monitoring. It would clearly reassure the camp population if the Rwandese Government were to define the different levels of responsibility in last year's genocide and examine specific measures in response to lower levels of responsibility. I was encouraged by the Government's declared intention to proceed along those lines.

In the former Yugoslavia, assisting the victims has never been an end in itself for us. Our goal was and remains to help them return safely to their homes or to find new homes for those for whom return is not feasible. Last Tuesday at the meeting of the working group on humanitarian issues of the international conference on Yugoslavia, I reiterated UNHCR's willingness to promote the organized return of refugees and displaced persons, in keeping with its role as the United Nations humanitarian lead agency and in cooperation with our sister organizations. At the same time, I stressed the importance of including humanitarian issues in the peace negotiations. People must not be used as pawns to further military and political interests. All returns must respect internationally accepted principles. The continued gross violations of human rights, the ethnic cleansing and the forcible return of refugees and displaced persons underline the importance of a firm commitment by all parties to human rights and humanitarian principles, and of international monitoring to ensure their compliance. In many situations people want to return home but are afraid to do so. Our negotiations to obtain the guarantees on safety, our presence in the camps to inform the refugees and in the areas of origin to reassure them are not only the prerequisites for successful repatriation but the predominant elements of our mandate for protection and solutions.

International presence in the country of origin is an important confidence-building measure, both for returnees and the internally displaced. It has been instrumental in persuading the refugees to return from Bangladesh to Myanmar. I am pleased to report that more than 200,000 refugees have returned home so far. I hope the remaining 50,000 will repatriate over the course of the coming months, allowing us to phase down in Bangladesh while maintaining our presence in the areas of origin in Myanmar until reintegration is completed.

Another example is Tajikistan, where UNHCR's mobile monitoring teams helped to stabilize the areas of origin and encouraged the vast majority of the refugees and displaced persons to return home safely. We closed the operation recently, successfully handing over the human rights aspects to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the rehabilitation issues to UNDP and other development actors.

I welcome the important operational role of United Nations human rights monitors as part of the collaborative effort to create safe conditions in countries such as Rwanda, El Salvador and Guatemala. However, the recent killing of returnees in Guatemala has underscored the difficulties of ensuring safety in the country of origin. I have noted the prompt action by the Government to prevent recurrences. Obviously the success of a proactive

solution-oriented approach is directly proportionate to the political commitment of the Governments concerned.

Reintegration and resources

Viable solutions demand that efforts to safeguard human rights be paralleled by endeavours to rehabilitate socio-economic conditions. UNHCR has relied on the model of small, community-based quick impact projects to spark rehabilitation, in situations as varied as Mozambique and Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Central America. Just as we have collaborated with political actors to ensure that humanitarian concerns are injected in the peace process, we have cooperated with development organizations like UNDP and financial institutions like the World Bank to incorporate our reintegration efforts into the larger rehabilitation and development plans. However, as we try to phase down in Mozambique, the challenge is to ensure that others have a stake in the reintegration process and will continue when we leave. To further this goal, we are embarking on a consultative process with the World Bank to identify concrete strategies for specific countries.

At a time when development assistance is shrinking and humanitarian needs are expanding, a third window for financing emergency rehabilitation activities is needed. It would allow donors to channel resources from both humanitarian and development funds and would allow organizations, whether humanitarian or development, to utilize them. In this way, both immediate rehabilitation and longer-term reconstruction needs could be addressed in the recovery process.

The issue of resources is critical when it comes to post-conflict rebuilding. It is tragic, therefore, that our programme in Mozambique is among those most strapped for cash. Nothing is more critical, however, than the funding shortfall of $50 million for the Burundi and Rwanda emergency operation, which leaves us with very little flexibility to adapt either to increased repatriation or potential exodus.

However, I am pleased to report that the overall level of financial contributions to UNHCR for 1995 has been impressive, totalling $757 million, of which $296 million is for General Programmes. This is roughly equivalent to the pledges made at this point last year. As UNHCR's total budget reaches $1.3 billion for the second consecutive year, I am the first to appreciate the enormousness of the demands we continue to make on our donors, large and small. I am very grateful for your generosity and understanding.

Imperative of prevention

The gap between expanding needs and limited resources reinforces the importance of the search for an effective strategy of prevention. In an effort to promote a preventive approach to refugee problems, UNHCR has moved towards greater involvement with the internally displaced, particularly in the CIS region. Within the framework of an inter-agency effort and based on a clear division of responsibilities, we successfully responded to the emergency needs of those displaced from the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation this past year. Having boosted the local response capacity, UNHCR is now gradually phasing down its activities.

True prevention means strengthening the will and capacity of Governments, individually and collectively, to pre-empt the reasons which force people to

move. This is the underlying thrust of our efforts in the CIS and the neighbouring countries, where we have embarked on an ambitious project to draw up a regional action plan to address past, present and potential displacement. Further to General Assembly resolution 49/173 of 23 December 1994, UNHCR, together with IOM and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE, has organized several subregional meetings in preparation for the regional conference, hopefully in mid-1996. The conference will adopt a declaration of principles and a programme of action. The process is proving to be invaluable in developing a regional strategy to avert population displacement in a part of the world marked by ethnic tensions.

The challenge of prevention, as of solution, is ultimately protection. Early international presence can sometimes have a preventive impact, as was our experience in Tajikistan. However, if we are to break the pattern of coerced displacement, the security of States must presuppose the security of people within those States. A major test for the coming decades, as I see it, will be to develop a humanitarian perspective of security. While UNHCR, with its limited mandate and resources, can make a modest contribution to that process, the primary responsibility for prevention, as for security, is clearly a political one.

Looking ahead: management strategies

Four years ago, UNHCR launched its strategy of prevention, preparedness and solutions. Today, the review of our challenges shows the dramatic transformation in the approach to refugee problems. The second edition of the "State of the World's Refugees", which comes out next month, highlights this solution-oriented approach. In taking the new direction, my Office has enjoyed the full confidence of the Executive Committee, for which I am grateful.

I have just returned from New York where the United Nations is preparing to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. It is a sobering moment as Member States evaluate the United Nations performance for the past five decades and reassess their own expectations for the future. Spurred by the financial crisis, the issue of reform is high on the agenda. The future of the United Nations will inevitably affect UNHCR. We too must prepare for a vigorous reappraisal of how we work. If we are to do our job properly, we too must use our resources more effectively. Consolidating what we have achieved so far, I believe that for the coming year, we must set the following four priorities:

First, we must revitalize our protection policies and strategies. They must both reflect the dimension of solutions and respond to the needs of a growing range of beneficiaries. We are being compelled often to provide refuge in the midst of conflict and promote repatriation in the midst of insecurity. How can protection strategies be reformulated to take account of these realities? How can we better help States, whether of asylum or origin, to meet their obligations in the light of these constraints? As a first step we are setting up an internal working group to look at the problems in Africa. We hope to undertake a similar exercise also for Europe. Given the dominance of the domestic agenda in many countries, mobilizing public opinion as a tool of protection will be an important element of the strategy.

In refining our approach to protection and solutions, we have not overlooked resettlement. Let me thank the Governments and non-governmental organizations for supporting the consultations we have launched and for their positive response to our resettlement appeal on the former Yugoslavia.

Secondly, we must rethink the way we plan. The dynamics of displacement today require a planning approach which is comprehensive and integrated: comprehensive in covering the sequence of refugee flows from prevention to emergency response to solutions, and integrated in bringing together the entire spectrum of issues and actors.

Planning for partnership is vital. Given the multiplicity of organizations and agencies on the humanitarian scene today, our objective is to increase the predictability of action for mutual support, and thereby create a better basis for cooperation and coordination. We have strengthened our dialogue with the political and peace-keeping arms of the United Nations. We have cooperated with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, and with the ICRC and IOM in their respective areas. We have refined the concept of service packages with Governments. We have further developed our operational agreement with WFP and signed a memorandum of understanding with UNFPA. I will be signing an agreement also with UNICEF when I visit New York next month. As for our closest partners, the non-governmental organizations, we are following up on PARINAC recommendations at the field level. The increasingly important role of regional organizations in peacemaking has added a new dimension to our partnership strategy, as has the growing interest of institutions such as the World Bank in refugee and returnee issues.

Thirdly, we must reinforce the proper implementation and monitoring of our policies, guidelines and programmes. This includes our ability to monitor and control our implementing partners. I see it as an important priority for the coming year.

One area where the gap between policy and action has constantly drawn the attention of the Executive Committee is that of refugee women. The Beijing Conference highlighted the considerable achievements we have made but also our shortcomings. We are introducing a number of specific measures to increase action and accountability, including additional resources to the field and stronger follow-up mechanism at headquarters. Furthermore, I have decided to reformulate UNHCR's recruitment policies to give priority to women Professional staff in order to try to reach parity by the year 2000.

Fourthly, we must restructure the way in which we work so as to improve our delivery, accountability and performance and build a capacity to contract and expand in response to operational demands.

I have taken a number of steps to achieve this goal, including strengthening the top management in UNHCR. In an emergency-driven organization such as ours, innovation can easily lapse into improvisation in the absence of a policy planning framework. This is why you will recall last year I decided to appoint a Director for Policy Planning and Operations. Having assessed the value and the need for the function, I am requesting the creation of a post of Assistant High Commissioner at the Assistant Secretary-General level, to which I hope you will accede. Overseeing the regional bureaux, policy development and external relations and supported by a revamped research and information capacity drawn from existing resources, the Assistant High Commissioner will act as the fulcrum for an integrated approach to policy, planning and operations in UNHCR.

Like so many others, we must also learn to do better and more with less. I have requested the Deputy High Commissioner to lead a management review of our priorities, procedures and personnel so that we can ascertain how best to improve delivery and increase productivity while reducing costs. Although the ratio of administrative costs between the field and headquarters has actually

declined, our expanding operations world wide have pushed our budget and our staff to levels at which they cannot be sustained for long. Growth has a high management price, and I am acutely conscious of my responsibility to assess those costs and make the cuts. In the course of the past year, we have taken a number of initiatives to streamline management, increase delegation to the field and utilize our resources better. One of the most significant steps we are taking is to prepare an information and communications systems plan which will take us into the twenty-first century.

I hope that one important result of all these initiatives will be the down-sizing of headquarters and the redeployment or reduction of staff in the field, based on improved forward planning and prioritization. As new operations open up, we must phase down elsewhere, as we did a few years ago in Cambodia and more recently in southern Africa. We expect dramatic reductions in South-East Asia in 1996. The Comprehensive Plan of Action is in its final phase. However, some transitional arrangements may still be necessary to ensure the smooth conversion of the operation into a migration programme.

Obviously the key to productivity and performance lies in a highly trained, motivated and mobile staff. The reform of UNHCR's human resources management, particularly the implementation of the career management system and strengthening of staff training, remains high on my agenda. I should like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Dan Conway, the outgoing Director of the Human Resources Management Division, for his efforts. I know that, as always, I can count on the commitment, competence and creativity of UNHCR staff in making the adjustments.

Let me conclude by saying that the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations is an opportune moment for UNHCR also to reflect on where it is going and how it will get there. The United Nations is here to stay but the very nature of UNHCR's mandate ordains that we must disappear when our task is done. Yet, every day brings new challenges for us, ranging from peace in the Balkans to return in Rwanda and retrenchment in Asia. The imperative for action carries within it an impetus for change. While retaining the core of our principles and the thrust of our strategy, we must continuously revitalize the way we think and review the way we work. Our goal is to be a slimmer, trimmer organization, responsive to emergency needs, aggressive in the search for solutions and committed to protection. Our donors expect it, the countries of asylum and origin need it, and the refugees deserve it. In that process of constant renewal and change, I know I can count on your support.